



COMMUNITY PROFILE

Twin Cities, MN

(Hennepin County CoC) & Saint Paul (Ramsey County CoC)

COMMUNITY CONTEXT			
County	Hennepin	Ramsey	Total
Community population	1.2 million	511,000	1.7 million
2014 PIT (overall homeless)	3,731	1,500	5,231
2013 CoC award	\$9,204,994	\$5,752,495	\$14,957,489
2013 WIA formula grant allocation	\$4,975,057	\$2,467,441	\$7,442,498
Current unemployment rate	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%

DESCRIPTION

The Twin Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Hennepin and Ramsey counties, and the State of Minnesota seek to end homelessness through a **Housing First and Jobs Fast** approach. We see increasing employment among people experiencing homelessness as essential to ending homelessness and welcome partnership with the Federal government and other communities to do so. *Heading Home: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* sets increasing employment as a priority. Our promising approaches for achieving housing and employment outcomes include:

- The Heading Home SNAP E&T Project at the Opportunity Center in Minneapolis is multi-agency collaboration co-locating housing and employment services, leveraging philanthropic resources from the United Way and other funders for providers to deliver services that would be difficult to offer or sustain with existing public funding streams. Since inception in 2011, this effort has served over 890 SNAP-eligible participants and achieved employment for 35 percent of participants completing the program, with average hourly wages of \$10.50 and 34 average work hours per week. Nearly half (42%) of program participants have criminal histories and **all were homeless one year or more at entry**.

The [nationally-recognized Minnesota FastTRAC](#) (Training, Resources, and Credentialing) Adult Career Pathways approach integrates basic skills education, career-specific training, and support services to meet the needs of working adults. Each local Minnesota FastTRAC Adult Career Pathways program consists of a series of connected educational and training programs that allow low-skill students to advance over time to higher education and employment in a given sector.



- Navigators offer intensive career and academic advising with supports like childcare and transportation.
- STEP-UP is a job program for youth ages 14-21, which recruits, trains and places mostly low-income youth in jobs with Twin Cities businesses, nonprofits, and public agencies. The program helps interns explore career interests, gain skills, make professional connections and prepare for their careers.
- Hennepin County's Stable Families Initiative delivers enhanced employment services to families with a history of shelter use. An employment counselor assists heads of households in job readiness, developing resumes, completing applications, and providing other assistance to land an interview and a job. A Career Counselor supports participants in maintaining and advancing their position.
- Ramsey County leads *Everybody In*, a regional collaboration of community, business, and government leaders using their social capital to advance high-impact strategies for equity in employment, focused on ending racial employment disparities in the Twin Cities metro area.

The workforce system acts on a mandate to serve all job-seekers and has not created tailored, population-specific approaches or ways to make the workforce system to the most vulnerable members of our community. Performance expectations for workforce services discourage efforts to engage people with significant employment barriers. While Minnesota regularly demonstrates that *everyone* experiencing homelessness can be safely and stably housed, the body of evidence about effective approaches for improvement employment has not lead to a similar clarity in practice: we are still developing know-how on improving employment outcomes.

Many potential first points of contact exist for people experiencing homelessness with the homeless response, workforce, and economic assistance systems. Coordinated assessment systems to assess the needs of people experiencing homelessness holistically and provide options best suited to end their homelessness are actively under development, distinct for each county (Hennepin and Ramsey) and population (adults, families, unaccompanied youth, and Veterans). The homeless response system, policies, and players also differ between counties, as distinct jurisdictions and Continuum of Care regions.

Hennepin County funds and provides shelter to all families and funds two large shelters for single adults and two youth shelters. Private funders support three other single adult shelters and one youth shelter. People reach shelter by calling 211 or by coming to a Hennepin County service center. Single adults can also go to a shelter to get in. Families in shelter are connected with services immediately to begin the process of finding housing and moving out.



Single adults who remain in shelter longer than a week are connected with a housing case manager to access supportive housing if appropriate. Connections to employment include referrals from shelters and shelter-based employment programs to the Opportunity Center or to mainstream workforce services. Transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and rapid re-housing programs vary in their focus on employment.

Apart from the absence of a right-to-shelter policy, Ramsey County's homeless response system has more limited capacity but shares many of these features, and also includes a centralized family coordinated intake process as the front door to its family shelter system. Both Ramsey and Hennepin Counties have street outreach teams, HUD Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) resources, and state-funded Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP) grants, which can assist in stabilizing employment to prevent future or sustained homelessness.

Workforce services are delivered through the mainstream workforce system or through economic assistance programs, particularly the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, known locally as the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). Services funded by USDA's SNAP E&T program introduce other variations. Hennepin and Ramsey counties largely operate distinct workforce systems, with a few providers serving both counties. The counties' public assistance programs recently collaborated to identify workforce needs and develop a shared philosophy of service and outcome expectations, which are now guiding funding actions in both counties. This effort introduced major philosophical shifts: serving whole families, not just an adult; providing community supports like parenting and literacy classes, children's mental health services, culturally-specific and -responsive services, and mentoring; promoting lifelong learning; emphasizing stackable credentials to promote career pathways; and confronting racial disparities.

Across these variations, the options for people experiencing homelessness in the Twin Cities to access support for employment proceeds along one or more of these pathways:

- Homelessness-targeted programs combining a workforce and housing focus, like the Opportunity Center (which are rare but promising)
- Linkages to employment services brokered by targeted homelessness housing programs (which focus primarily on housing outcomes, and may lack access to needed employment supports)
- Workforce programs targeting populations with high employment barriers (which might not specifically target people experiencing homelessness)



- Workforce programs tied to mainstream economic assistance programs (which are large in scale but difficult to customize to the needs of homeless populations specifically)
- Mainstream workforce programs (which are large in scale but face disincentives for engaging populations with significant employment barriers)

In addition to the approaches described above, Hennepin and Ramsey counties provide Diversionary Work Program (DWP) services for people as they first access welfare funds. DWP-eligible families receive intensive services that focus on immediate employment. After four months, if the crisis persists, families may be eligible for TANF. Hennepin County has a targeted program for unemployed single adults experiencing homelessness. Participants receive two weeks of pre-employment counseling and then can enroll in job skills training and work with a housing case worker simultaneously to find employment and housing.

Ramsey County designed a sector-based stackable credential initiative called Healthcare Pathways (Personal Care Attendant and Certified Nurse Assistant, with follow-on options for Trained Medication Aide (TMA) and Phlebotomy certificates), a partnership with Ramsey County Workforce Solutions, Century College, and area healthcare facilities. . By stacking credentials, wages increase from \$9.00 per hour to \$13.50 per hour. In addition, the Ramsey County Families Achieving Success Today (FAST) program aims to find better paths to employment and family and economic stability for MFIP recipients with disabilities who might otherwise apply to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or have difficulty engaging in employment services.

The target population includes all people in Hennepin and Ramsey counties experiencing homelessness or at risk for homelessness. In general, we believe that employment is important for everyone experiencing or at risk of homelessness, regardless of barriers, disabilities, or other sources of income.

- Hennepin County's 2014 Point-in-Time (PIT) count identified 3,731 people experiencing homelessness, including 1,358 children and 2,370 adults. Two-thirds were in emergency shelter, 27 percent in transitional housing, and 6 percent unsheltered (197 people). Forty-four percent were women. The majority were people of color: 64 percent African American, 7 percent Native Americans, and 5 percent Latino. Fifteen percent were chronically homeless.
- Ramsey County's 2014 PIT identified 1,500 people, including 986 adults and 514 children. Of the sheltered population, half were in emergency shelter and half in transitional housing. Only 4.5 percent of the total were unsheltered. Fifty-two percent were women, 57 percent African American, 10 percent Latino, five percent American Indian, and six percent multiple races. Seventeen percent were chronically homelessness.



COLLABORATION

Hennepin County's efforts to end homelessness are grounded in collaboration, guided by a ten-year plan founded by nearly seventy community leaders in 2006. The previously mentioned Opportunity Center and the Stable Families Initiative serve as examples of collaborative, silo-crossing approaches. In addition, Ramsey County's financial workers and employment counselors are co-located in Ramsey County shelters to assist with access to benefits, including SNAP E&T enrollment and job placement assistance.

INNOVATION

Although **targeted models** focused on employment for people experiencing homelessness are limited, they are helping to illuminate effective approaches. We see significant potential impact of increased flexibility (perhaps under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) to field, develop, and refine these approaches, and to set appropriate performance expectations for their success. As with the Opportunity Center, **philanthropic support** has been a vital for filling gaps in existing services to create bridges and pathways to mainstream workforce systems, as well as to create incentives for engaging individuals with significant employment barriers. Similarly, **leveraging state funding sources** is an important strategy. In addition to DEED's strategic use of SNAP E&T resource for the Opportunity Center, Minnesota's Group Residential Housing (GRH) program has been used extensively to house chronically homeless individuals and families, covering the majority of rent and some service costs. Structured as a state-funded income support program, recent policy changes have focused on reducing work disincentives and increasing employment for GRH participants.

FUNDING FOR INITIATIVE/PROJECTS

The Opportunity Center funding approach described above represents the most innovative model in the Twin Cities for supporting targeted employment and housing supports for people experiencing homelessness, leveraging private philanthropic resources to finance match-eligible services that draw Federal financial participation (\$800,000 to date) from SNAP E&T, with reimbursement distributed to providers by DEED, the state's workforce agency. RESOURCE, Inc. also has a Young Dads program that serves primarily African American men with criminal backgrounds who struggle with homelessness. Participants are often doubled up and do not qualify for other assistance. This program pools Hennepin County, United Way, and other philanthropic support to provide customized services to this population.

For 2013 WIA funds, Hennepin County received \$4,975,057 (across two Workforce Investment Boards: one in Minneapolis and another that includes suburban Hennepin



County) and Ramsey County received \$2,467,441. Other funding streams include the Minnesota Youth Program (\$658,325 for Minneapolis/ Hennepin County and \$405,185 for Ramsey County) and TANF Consolidated funds for the DWP and MFIP employment services for TANF families and Emergency Services to address basic needs of families experiencing difficulties in paying their rent and utility bills, which often prevents eviction and homelessness. TANF funds are also used to support housing partnerships initiatives to address housing needs and support collaborations to assist families in becoming self-sufficient. TANF funds used for employment total \$27.9 million in Hennepin County and \$17.1 million in Ramsey County.

CONNECTION TO EMPLOYERS

Employers are engaged by employment and training programs through established partnerships to link job seekers with jobs. By learning from employers about current practices and emerging trends in their sectors, these programs guide job seekers to relevant training, education, and employment opportunities to advance their careers. Employers also mentor participants, coaching on soft skills. E&T programs identify job openings through web-based research, faxed or mailed job announcements, and extensive networking. Job leads are maintained in a variety of formats. Workforce Investment Boards, business-led boards of community leaders from a variety of industries, connect employers with efforts to employ people experiencing homelessness. Routine engagement of employers in homeless service planning is limited.

DATA AND RESULTS

Minnesota workforce programs use Workforce One, a web-based application to track employment and training services to more than 100,000 customers across Minnesota's One Stop network. It maintains client-level demographic data and employment outcomes like job placements and wages. Minnesota's HMIS is undergoing significant changes and currently has limited connection to other data systems. Hennepin County maintains a shelter database that can be matched with other county data. Hennepin County sponsored research to examine the incomes of families entering shelter and their incomes a year later, using DEED data on wages. Only 29 percent of families earned income in the quarter preceding shelter entry and only 29 percent earned income one year later. This motivated the Stable Families Initiative, in which earned income will be measured pre- and post-enrollment. As this program is relatively new, results are forthcoming. Results for the Opportunity Center are reported above.

COMMUNITY CONTACT

Eric I. Grumdahl, Special Advisor on Ending Veteran Homelessness
Minnesota Office to Prevent and End Homelessness
eric.grumdahl@state.mn.us